

Academic Acceleration Statement 2013

Academic acceleration is one of the cornerstones of exemplary education practices, with more research supporting this intervention than any other in the literature on high ability individuals. The practice of educational acceleration has long been used to match high level student general ability and specific talent with optimal learning opportunities. The purposes of acceleration as a practice are 1) to adjust the pace of instruction to the students' capability in order to develop potential and a sound work ethic, 2) to provide an appropriate level of challenge, pace, and complexity as high ability students do not benefit from repetitious learning, and 3) to allow students opportunities to work with their intellectual peers. Acceleration benefits many highly capable individuals by better motivating them toward schooling, promoting more challenging options in the K12 years, and preparing them to begin contributing to society at an earlier age. Evidence further suggests that acceleration can be a successful strategy with low income, minority, and students with learning problems as well.

Acceleration practices involve allowing a student to move through traditional educational organizations more rapidly, based on readiness and motivation. Research documents the potential academic benefits and positive outcomes of all forms of appropriately implemented acceleration strategies for intellectually gifted and academically talented learners. These research-based best practices include grade skipping, telescoping, early entrance into kindergarten or college, credit by examination, and acceleration in content areas through such programs as Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate. Both group and individual decisions can be made in respect to accelerative options.

Acceleration options should be available at each stage of development in a child's educational program from early entrance to primary school up through early college entry in order to even out the curriculum challenge. Parents may also wish to seek out accelerative opportunities beyond the school setting in order to accommodate an individual student need that cannot be met in traditional school settings.

Yet acceleration decisions should be made collaboratively based on the needs of the whole child. In decision-making about the appropriateness of a particular form of acceleration and the extent of acceleration for a given child at a given time, educators and parents should consider the child's intellectual and academic profile, socio-emotional and physical development, and preferences and dispositions of the child relative to the decision since acceleration may not always be the appropriate option for every high ability child. Factors that enhance the success of acceleration practices include 1) positive attitudes of teachers, 2) timelines related to the decision, 3) parental support, 4) careful monitoring of the implementation, and 5) supportive school, district, and state climates and cultures.

Highly able students with capability and motivation to succeed in placements beyond traditional age/grade parameters should be provided the opportunity to enroll in appropriate classes and educational settings. Acceleration policies in schools, districts and states should ensure that opportunities such as the ones described are available provisions in all programs for individuals and groups of learners ready to advance beyond the standard curriculum at any age and in any area of learning.

Selected References

Colangelo, N., Assouline, S. G., & Gross, M. U. M. (2004). A nation deceived: How schools hold back America's Students: The Templeton National Report on Acceleration. Iowa City, IA: Belin-Blank Center. (Volumes 1 and 2).

In Volume 1, this report issues a wake-up call to America's schools on the need to provide accelerative options at every stage of development for high ability learners, using research evidence coupled with student vignettes of successful acceleration. The report argues convincingly for action on this key programming feature. In Volume 2 the argument for acceleration is further buttressed by actual data presented by researchers demonstrating its positive effects on the learning patterns of high ability students.

Gross, M. U. M. (2004). Exceptionally Gifted Children, London: Routledge.

This second edition of a longitudinal study highlights ongoing insights into the lives of highly gifted children in Australia, their families and their schools. It provides important findings into the social, emotional and academic needs of these children as they mature.

Rogers, K. (2003). Reforming gifted education: How parents and teachers can match the program to the child, Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press Inc.

This comprehensive text on program development provides meta-analyses on the issue of acceleration, coupled with sound practical strategies for employing it in schools.

VanTassel-Baska, J. (2004). The acceleration of gifted students' programs and curricula. In Karnes, F. A. & Stephens, K. R. (eds.) fastback series, Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

This practical guide provides administrators and teachers with ideas, strategies, and assessment protocols for using various techniques of acceleration in school, including the diagnostic prescriptive approach, compacting, testing out of curriculum standards, and selection of advanced materials.

Adapted from the National Association for Gifted Children Position Paper of 9-27-04

**"Not only was academic achievement more positive for the grade skipped learners, but also their social adjustment and academic self-esteem were more positive." Karen B. Rogers,
University of St. Thomas (Minnesota)**

**"Doing nothing is not the same as doing no harm." Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross
University of Iowa**

**"No other arrangements for gifted children works as well as acceleration." James A. Kulik,
University of Michigan**